

# THE GULL



GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

VOL. 90

NO. 3

MARCH 2005

FOUNDED 1917

## Numbers Low, Rare Birds High on San Francisco CBC

**O**n Tuesday, December 28, 2004, 98 birders in the field and 3 birders counting at feeders participated in the San Francisco Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Surveying the birds of the northern peninsula for 12 hours, beginning just after 5 a.m., counters tallied 162 species, down 11 from the 2003 CBC. Four more species were added during the count period of three days before and three days after December 28. Still, we had an incredible run of rare birds both on count day and during the count period.

The weather was threatening all morning, with showers starting around noon and steady rain beginning across the count circle around 3 p.m. Due to soaking rains, most teams left the field between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m., the least productive part of the day in most areas.

Although the species total was within the range of normal for this CBC, the 47,415 birds counted were on the low side. This was particularly true of ducks and gulls. A herring run was in progress, but failed to produce the huge numbers of birds often associated with this annual event. California Quail continue to maintain a tenuous presence. Of the 26 quail observed—itsself a low number—only 7 were found in San Francisco. Numbers of Bewick's Wrens and Spotted Towhees continue to decline significantly. This trend is true for all species associated with coastal scrub and oak woodlands.

The San Francisco count always seems to have its share of neotropical migrants. The coast at Fort Funston produced a Barn Swallow (very rare during winter), and an Orchard Oriole was at Lake Merced. Alert counters found a Bullock's Oriole near the buffalo paddock in Golden Gate Park, a Black-throated Gray Warbler and a Summer Tanager in the eastern end of the park, and a Magnolia Warbler at Pine Lake near Stern Grove.

San Francisco CBC, continued on page 12



Ross's Goose, seen at Sharps Park Golf Course on count day.

Calvin Lou

## New Classes for Bay Area Birders

**G**olden Gate Audubon has formed an exciting new partnership with the Albany Adult School to offer more birding classes to Bay Area residents. This partnership will allow both entities to hold additional birding classes with more instructors throughout the year. We also hope to offer a broader suite of classes, including beginning and intermediate identification classes as well as special themes of interest to more seasoned birders.

Our partnership begins this spring with two classes: a popular field-identification class taught by Bob Lewis and Rusty Scalf, and a new migration class, which will be team-taught by a range of instructors and will feature field trips to a variety of Bay Area locations. Additional classes will be offered in summer and fall. The classes meet in Albany High School.

We hope that increased birding classes will be a service to our members—and a way to inspire more people to appreciate the rich avian life of the Bay Area.

### Spring Birding Classes

**Field Identification** Wednesdays, 7 – 9 p.m.  
 Begins April 6; lasts six weeks and includes Saturday or Sunday field trips and one weekend trip. \$55

**Bird Migration** Thursdays, 7 – 8:30 p.m.  
 Begins April 7; lasts six weeks and includes Saturday field trips. \$55

**Registration deadline: March 14**

**Online** [www.albany.k12.ca.us/adult](http://www.albany.k12.ca.us/adult)

**Phone** 510.559.6580

**Walk up** Albany Adult School office  
 601 San Gabriel Avenue, Albany

### INSIDE

**3** Working with the Opposition

**4** GGA Gets Theatrical

**6** Field Trips

**10** Backyard Birder





## ROSTER

### ELECTED DIRECTORS

Miles McKey ('05)	<b>President</b>
Al Peters ('07)	<b>Treasurer</b>
Jacqui Smalley ('06)	<b>Secretary</b>
John Luther ('05)	
Allan Ridley ('05)	<b>Education</b>
Bob Bennett ('06)	<b>San Francisco Conservation</b>
Anne McTavish ('06)	<b>Programs</b>
Jacqui Smalley ('06)	<b>Board Development</b>
Marjorie Blackwell ('07)	<b>Publications/Publicity</b>
Autumn Garrett ('07)	<b>Membership</b>

### DESIGNATED DIRECTORS ('05)

Kevin Consey	<b>Finance</b>
Pat Eckhardt	<b>East Bay Conservation</b>
Leora Feeney	<b>FAWR</b>
Susan Groves	<b>Field Trips</b>
Elizabeth McNamee	<b>Development</b>
Bob Risebrough	<b>Latin America</b>

**NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRD BOX**  
415.681.7422

### OBSERVATIONS

Bruce Mast bmast@alumni.rice.edu

### WEBMASTER

webmaster@goldengateaudubon.org

### GULL EDITORS

Marjorie Blackwell marjb@sbcglobal.net  
Judith Dunham 510.841.8149

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Elizabeth Murdock 510.843.9912

### CONSERVATION DIRECTOR

Arthur Feinstein 510.843.6551

### ECO-OAKLAND PROGRAM MANAGER

Amiko Mayeno 510.635.5533

### OFFICE MANAGER

Tara Zuardo 510.843.2222

### HOSPITALITY COORDINATOR

Susanne Shields 415.810.4900

The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 15, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Society membership is \$25 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. Monthly meeting: second Friday in the West Bay; third Thursday in the East Bay, 7 p.m.

*The Gull* is published each month except July and August by the Golden Gate Audubon Society. Special third-class postage paid in Oakland, CA. Send address changes to office promptly. The Post Office does not forward *The Gull*.

The *Gull* deadline for submissions is five weeks prior to the month of publication.

The *Gull* - ISSN 0164-971X

**Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc.**  
2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G  
Berkeley, CA 94702

Phone: 510.843.2222 • Fax: 510.843.5351

www.goldengateaudubon.org

ggas@goldengateaudubon.org

Nature Store Hours: Mon - Fri 9-12, 1-5

Design and layout  
e.g. communications



Printed with vegetable based inks  
On Processed Chlorine free paper  
80% post Consumer Waste content

INKWORKS

# Bleak News for Birds Gives Audubon Cause for Action

There is a lot of bad news for birds right now. National Audubon Society recently released its 2004 "State of the Birds" report, which examines five major terrestrial habitat types—grasslands, shrublands, woodlands, water, and urban—and reports significant declines in bird species in each. It details threats to habitats and notes unthinkable rates of bird loss—such as the 85 percent of grassland bird species now in decline. In sum, National Audubon concludes that 23 percent of 654 native birds analyzed are of moderate or high conservation concern.

On a global scale, the state of the birds is even grimmer. A 2003 WorldWatch Institute report states that birds are disappearing at 50 times the natural rate of loss, citing 128 species vanishing in the last 500 years, with 103 of those since 1800. Importantly, the report implicates human-related factors as threats to 99 percent of the species in greatest danger.

Ever-increasing scientific evidence confirms the certainty and gravity of human-related global warming, with one recent study projecting the loss of more than one million species (as many as 30 percent) if global temperatures rise as predicted over the next 50 years. The authors also confirm human-related global warming as one of the greatest threats to biodiversity.

Conservation experts have dubbed this era "the sixth great extinction." (Dinosaurs disappeared during the fifth.) What differentiates this extinction event from its predecessors is that this one is driven by one species—*Homo sapiens*.

Finding solutions to ease our impact on the planet—and on our fellow inhabitants—is one of the greatest challenges we face. Even in the Bay Area, we constantly struggle to balance the pressures of overpopulation and development with our desire to protect wildlife and native habitat.

We should be acting urgently in the face of this crisis. And yet the current administration in Washington seems to be high-tailing it in the opposite direction—much to the chagrin of liberal and conservative environmentalists alike. In the past two years, the Pentagon has sought exemptions to parts of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Clean Air Act, and laws governing toxic waste clean-up. Proposed changes to the ESA would reduce critical habitat designations and gut the way science is used to protect species. Administration actions have stripped isolated wetlands—which provide vital habitat for many species, including migratory birds—of Clean Water Act protection. The "Healthy Forests" initiative is healthier for timber companies than it is for forests, and the "Clear Skies" initiative reduces emissions less than the enforcement of existing Clean Air Act regulations would do. And, to make matters worse, many of these initiatives remove or reduce opportunities for public comment—from Central Valley water contracts that are being negotiated without environmental review to newly proposed national forest management rules that promise greater "regulatory efficiency."

But, while the news is bleak, it only gives greater urgency to our work here. Golden Gate Audubon's efforts to protect and restore Bay Area wetlands are critical to "our" wildlife—both resident and migratory (witness the success of Arrowhead Marsh; see March 11 program, page 5). Our work has helped to bolster local populations of California Least Terns, Brown Pelicans, and Clapper Rails, plus myriad other birds and wildlife. And our advocacy efforts can make a difference—as they did in 2004 when we helped to strengthen California's enforcement of isolated wetlands protection.

We will continue to do our part locally while we urge stronger conservation leadership at the national level. Although national action is sorely needed, our local contribution is just as vital for Bay Area wildlife.

By Elizabeth Murdock, Executive Director

# Working with the Opposition Can Lead to Success

**C**onservation successes are not always won by fighting development. Occasionally we win through collaboration and solutions that benefit all. Although rare, these are often the strongest victories of all. This strategy actually worked to resolve issues surrounding the Eastshore State Park, the newly created park that stretches along the East Bay from the Emeryville Crescent to the Richmond shoreline.

Once planned for mega-industrial development, the shoreline was saved after years of unrelenting citizen advocacy and tremendous assistance from former Assemblyman Tom Bates, now Mayor of Berkeley, who helped raise money for state acquisition of the 270-acre park.

Once the land was acquired, the question was how it should be used. When the California State Parks Department began the planning process in 2001, there were numerous proposals. Environmentalists, led by Golden Gate Audubon, wanted the land saved for wildlife habitat and nature recreation, while sports advocates wanted sports fields and off-leash dog areas.

Given the rarity of open fields, grasslands and coastal scrub habitat in the intensely developed Bay Area, Golden Gate Audubon was determined to preserve some of these rare open spaces to preserve wildlife habitat. Raptors and grassland birds in the East Bay have lost so much land that once common species are disappearing. Horned Larks, meadowlarks, shrikes, and raptors, such as the Burrowing Owl, White-tailed Kite, and Northern Harrier, are harder and harder to find. At meeting after meeting, wildlife advocates stood unhappily in opposition to proponents of the sports fields, whose requests included the important wildlife area at the Albany Plateau. Surely there had to be a solution satisfactory for all.

Mayor Bates set up several working sessions to resolve the impasse. Finally a solution was proposed. The East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) still had some acquisition money set aside for the East Bay shoreline, and Golden Gate



Loggerhead Shrike.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Fields, the race track in the middle of the park, had about 14 acres it was not using. Conservationists agreed to join forces with the sports-field advocates to convince the EBRPD to buy those 14 acres, and we agreed to help the sports-field proponents find millions of dollars to construct sports-field. In return, the sports-field folk agreed to have the Albany Plateau designated conservation land—land managed for wildlife habitat and compatible human recreation, such as hiking, biking, and picnicking.

The solution worked. EBRPD bought the 14 acres, and conservationists and sports-field advocates formed a united front supporting grant requests for the recreational fields. Recently, the first grant for the fields was received for \$3 million, enough to allow the sports-field advocates to declare that the Albany Plateau should

be designated "Conservation Land."

And we're not done yet! We still need to raise more money to complete all the fields and to address environmental issues, such as night lighting and mitigating for impacts to Burrowing Owl habitat at the edge of the sports fields. But with everyone working together, I am confident these obstacles will be overcome.

Golden Gate Audubon has helped frame the wildlife issues from the start. We have attended crucial meetings and supported the grant funding efforts. It has been a pleasure to work with all of the parties and to find that, with patience and innovation, success can be achieved. Thanks to the many people willing to find solutions to a seemingly intractable problem: Norman LaForce of the Sierra Club and Robert Cheasty of Citizens for an Eastshore State Park, who conceived the land trade idea; Mayor Tom Bates, who brought all sides together; and Richard McClure, Roger Carlson, and Greg Lyman from the sports-field community who were willing to take a chance.

## How You Can Help

Richard McClure hopes we will develop a simple bird identification card that can be distributed at the sports fields for spectators to identify birds when the action is slow. If you are interested in helping with this project, please contact me directly.

by Arthur Feinstein, Conservation Director

## Birding the Globe with GGA

GGA members have an opportunity to go on three spring trips outside the Bay Area.

**Panama, April 3 – 10** This GGA Latin America Committee trip goes to the Canal Zone, the renowned Canopy Tower, and other sites in this bird-rich country where 960 species have been recorded. Two optional extensions, to the western Darien highlands and to a Harpy Eagle nest, are offered. Contact Bob Risebrough, 510.549.2476, [pelecanus@igc.org](mailto:pelecanus@igc.org).

**Birding in Lesvos, Greece, April 30 – May 8** Harry Fuller leads a trip to this Aegean island during spring migration, when birders can see Asian species seldom found farther west. Two days are set aside for visiting ancient Athens. For details, go to [www.towhee.net](http://www.towhee.net).

**Birding in New York City, May 2005** A six-day trip, led by Alan Hopkins, will visit the city's hotspots: Central Park, Jamaica Bay National Wildlife Refuge in Queens, and Brooklyn's Prospect Park. For information, call 415.664.0983.

# Golden Gate Audubon Gets Theatrical

Wild blackberries, hummingbirds, bumble bees, pesticides, and two urban youth all play a role in an original play produced and performed by Golden Gate Audubon education staff, volunteers and student interns. "The Case of the Missing Blackberry Pie" was the brainchild of Amiko Mayeno, Eco-Oakland\* Program Manager, who wrote the script. The play is being performed this spring for several hundred elementary school students in nine East Oakland schools.

"The idea is to get young children to understand how they depend on natural systems to survive," says Amiko. "I wanted to choose a theme the kids could understand and came up with the idea of a blackberry pie. In our urbanized area, children do not have much opportunity to learn about fruit and vegetable gardening, but many of them have seen blackberries growing wild in their neighborhoods. So, we used the blackberries to introduce the topic of pollination, and how we humans depend on wild pollinators, such as bumble bees, bats and hummingbirds, to help plants produce nuts and fruits, such as watermelon, bananas, apples, oranges, and blackberries.

"The main character is a girl who is very concerned because every year she and her grandmother make a blackberry pie, but this year there are no berries. Step by step the mystery unfolds, and we find out that

pesticides have been killing off the native bumble bees that were pollinating the plants. In addition, a new mall down the street destroyed the bees' nesting ground. The girl eventually becomes an activist and starts a petition drive to stop the use of pesticides and bring back the bumblebees."

Aida Villa, Eco-Oakland's Youth Coordinator, produced and directs the play and also plays a part. The other actors are Golden Gate Audubon volunteer Audre Newman, and student interns: Jamiylah Asaad, a student at Metwest High School, and Kara Borowski, a University of California, Berkeley student.

"This has been an amazing volunteer effort," reports Aida. "Many people contributed to making the play possible. Although we're all amateurs and do not have any theatrical experience, everyone's hard work and dedication made it come together. Audre Newman stayed up until 2 a.m. designing and creating a beautiful bat mask. She and Janet Leung, Golden Gate Audubon high school intern from Metwest High School, designed and made the bat costume. Golden Gate Audubon volunteers Sean Fine and Vicki Wojcik designed the set and helped make it. And volunteers Maria Sanchez, Alma Villa, and Larry Valdilla worked on the set production."

According to Amiko, "The play was designed around the second- and third-grade literacy curriculum of Oakland public schools. It all started when a teacher on our advisory committee suggested we develop a



Amiko Mayeno

Three suspects in the Eco-Oakland mystery, "The Case of the Missing Blackberry Pie."

curriculum based on 'city wildlife,' which is a study unit. The play is helping bring the literacy curriculum to life and getting students excited about their studies while inspiring environmental stewardship."

In addition to performing in nine schools, Amiko plans to schedule the play in more schools in May, and she hopes to set up performances in East Oakland community centers, libraries, and recreation centers this summer.

\* GGA has recently changed the name of its Martin Luther King, Jr. Environmental Education Program to Eco-Oakland.

## Birding Festivals

**The Seventh Annual Aleutian Goose Festival**, held April 1–3 in Crescent City, California, offers field trips to both coastal and inland areas, including Redwood National and State Parks, Smith River National Recreation Area, Castle Rock Wildlife Refuge, Tolowa Dunes State Park, Lake Earl Wildlife Area, and other Del Norte County locations. The festival's centerpiece is the spectacular dawn flight of nearly 30,000 geese from Castle Rock National Wildlife Refuge. Birders can choose from among trips that focus on observing and identifying shorebirds, pelagic species, raptors, or owls. The total number of species seen during previous festivals has exceeded 180. For information, call 800.343.8300 or 707.465.0880 or go to [www.aleutiangoosefestival.org/events.html](http://www.aleutiangoosefestival.org/events.html).

**The 10th Annual Godwit Days**, scheduled for April 15–17 in Arcata, is held at the peak of spring migration when participants can see an abundance of shorebirds, waterbirds, pelagic birds, and passerines. The festival's Humboldt Big Day field trip has consistently tallied more than 110 species. The array of Humboldt County trips go to Arcata Marsh, Lanphere Dunes, Headwaters Forest, and Humboldt Bay, among other destinations. Specialty excursions target Marbled Murrelet, Tufted Puffin, and grouse. For information call 800.908.9464 or 707.822.4500 or go to [www.godwitdays.com](http://www.godwitdays.com).

# PROGRAMS

Anne McTavish



Programs begin at 7:30 p.m. At 7 p.m., healthful, delicious snacks are served by hospitality coordinator, Susanne Shields. (All utensils, cups, and plates are made from corn, wheat, soy, and sugarcane by-products, and are compostable and break down in landfills in three weeks.) If you would like to suggest food and drinks for meetings or would like to help, call Susanne at 415.810.4900, or email [susannekshields@yahoo.com](mailto:susannekshields@yahoo.com). For information about upcoming events, detailed directions, or updates, see [www.goldengateaudubon.org/Chapter/programs2005](http://www.goldengateaudubon.org/Chapter/programs2005).

## The Miracle of Restoration

San Francisco

Friday, March 11

Arthur Feinstein

Join GGA Director of Conservation Arthur Feinstein for a fascinating exploration of the challenges and rare successes of wetland restoration. A recently completed five-year study proves the remarkable effectiveness of the restoration project at Martin Luther King, Jr. Regional Shoreline Park. GGA has played a leading role in the success of this project, which created 37 acres of tidal marsh, 14 acres of seasonal wetlands, and 20 acres of associated uplands. GGA volunteers have conducted censuses of the water birds for the last five years and have recorded high numbers using the newly restored habitats. Multiple slides of birds will illustrate the project's success.

Arthur will also lead a tour of one of the country's most ambitious wetland restoration projects: 15,000 acres of salt ponds in the South Bay. The project's success depends on the fate of several endangered species and the largest concentration of shorebirds on the West Coast. The goal is to restore large amounts of tidal wetlands, while maintaining sufficient shallow, salt-pond shorebird habitat. Arthur is part of the stakeholder group helping to direct the project. A successful conclusion will create a San Francisco Bay incredibly rich in water birds.

County Fair building, Strybing Arboretum,  
Golden Gate Park, 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue at Lincoln Way  
Directions: [www.strybing.org/visiting/page2.html](http://www.strybing.org/visiting/page2.html)

## Saving the Wild Cheetah

Berkeley

\* Thursday, March 24

Dr. Laurie Marker

Dr. Laurie Marker, founder and executive director of the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF), will give an illustrated presentation on her 30-year effort to save the wild cheetah from extinction. Dr. Marker helped develop the U.S. and international captive-breeding program, establishing the most successful cheetah program in North America.

She first traveled to Namibia in 1977, and after learning about the conflict between Namibian livestock farmers and cheetahs, she realized that wild cheetahs needed help. For the next 10 years, she continued traveling to Africa to learn more about what could be done to assist wild cheetah populations. She set up the not-for-profit CCF in 1990 and moved to Namibia to develop a permanent conservation research center.

CCF now has branches in Kenya, the U.S., the U.K., and Canada and links to sister organizations in South Africa, Botswana, and Iran. CCF's activities are housed at the International Research and Education Centre in the main cheetah habitat of each country. The goal is to ensure the long-term survival of the cheetah and its ecosystem through a conservation program of research, management and education. For more information, go to [www.cheetah.org](http://www.cheetah.org).

\* Change of date from regularly scheduled programs.  
Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda  
(between Solano and Marin)

Directions: [www.northbrae.org/directions.html](http://www.northbrae.org/directions.html)

## GGA Hosts Needed at Audubon Canyon Ranch

Want a chance to enjoy a beautiful nature and birding site while helping others? Join the GGA team of Audubon Canyon Ranch (ACR) hosts this spring. Each year, from mid-March to mid-July, thousands of visitors come to see herons and egrets nesting in the redwood trees at the ACR Bolinas Preserve, overlooking Bolinas Lagoon in western Marin County. Hosts greet and direct visitors and answer questions. (All information is provided in advance.) Golden Gate Audubon, which helped establish Audubon Canyon Ranch, is responsible for providing volunteer hosts on the following dates: April 2 and 3; May 7, 8, 29, and 30; June 25 and 26; and July 17. For more information and to sign up, contact Bill Hering at 415.863.3625 or [bhering@aao.org](mailto:bhering@aao.org).

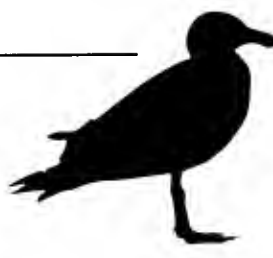
## Glen Canyon Park Work Day

The San Francisco GGA Conservation Committee is cosponsoring a special work day at Glen Canyon Park on Saturday, April 16, from 9 a.m. to noon. We will join Friends of Glen Canyon Park and San Francisco Recreation and Park Department to restore riparian habitat along one of the city's only flowing creeks. Volunteers will also plant native species that provide food and shelter for birds and other wildlife, such as a gray fox that lived in the canyon in recent years. Glen Canyon has three distinct habitats that provide unique biodiversity in a city park. Birders may also enjoy seeing Lazuli Buntings and Bullock's Orioles at this time of year. Meet at the Recreation Center, near Children's Playground. For more information and directions, contact S.F. Conservation Chair Bob Bennett at [link2Bob@aol.com](mailto:link2Bob@aol.com).



# FIELD TRIPS

Susan Groves



## Berkeley Waterfront

**Saturday, March 5**

Leader: Anne Hoff

510.845.5908, Anne2210B@aol.com

Meet at north end of Hs. Lordships parking lot at 8:30 a.m. The new freshwater ponds in Eastshore State Park are attracting shorebirds, waterfowl, and gulls. What more could you ask? Maybe a Burrowing Owl at Chavez Park or Black-crowned Night-herons at Aquatic Park, or diving ducks and loons off the Berkeley Pier. If in doubt about the weather, call leader between 7 and 7:30 a.m. the morning of trip. Heavy rain cancels.

## Birding for Children

*San Francisco Botanical Garden*

**Saturday, March 5**

Leaders: Angie Geiger and

Nancy DeStefanis, San Francisco Nature Education, and Darin Dawson,

San Francisco Botanical Garden docent, 415.387.9160, [www.sfnature.org](http://www.sfnature.org)

Meet at 10 a.m. for this first Saturday of the month trip at the kiosk/bookstore near main gate of San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum, Ninth Ave. at Lincoln Way. See February *Gull* for details.

## Strybing Arboretum

*San Francisco*

**Sundays, March 6 and April 3**

Leaders: Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna, 415.566.324;

Ginny Marshall, 650.349.3780

For this regular first Sunday of the month half-day trip, meet at the front gate of the

arboretum, Ninth Ave. and Lincoln Way. See December *Gull* for details.

## Wednesday at Arrowhead Marsh

*Oakland*

**Wednesday, March 9**

Leader: Courtenay Peddle, 510.532.8911

(no calls before 9 am), [capeddle@there.net](mailto:capeddle@there.net)

Meet at Arrowhead Marsh parking lot at 9:30 a.m. to study and enjoy wintering birds. For details and directions, see February *Gull*.

## Owl Prowl

*Inspiration Point, Tilden Regional Park*

**Saturday, March 12**

Leader: Bob Power

510.482.9601, [rcpower@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rcpower@sbcglobal.net)

Meet at Inspiration Point at 6 p.m., but call leader to confirm. Trip lasts until 10 p.m. We will do a driving tour of lands to west, north, east, and south of San Pablo Reservoir to listen for owl species. Number and frequency of stops to be determined. Bring a bag dinner, snacks, and warm liquids. Dress in warm layers and comfortable/stable footwear. Binoculars are optional. Flashlights are recommended. Heavy rain cancels.

## Bicycle Trip: Quarry Lakes/Alameda Creek/Coyote Hills

*Alameda County*

**Saturday, March 12**

Leader: Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233

(no calls after 9 pm), call for cell number, [kathy\\_jarrett@yahoo.com](mailto:kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com)

Meet at 7:55 a.m. just outside turnstile at Union City BART Station or at 8:15 a.m.

at Isherwood Staging area in Fremont. On the creek, marsh, and bay, we have seen 50 to 60 species on previous trips. We ride about 22 miles, all on bike trails, with very little uphill. We will start with a loop of the ponds at Quarry Lakes, then bike along Alameda Creek Regional Trail to Coyote Hills, returning to BART/Isherwood mid to late afternoon. Bring lunch and liquids and dress for cool, windy weather. Bicycle helmet required. Rain cancels. All levels of birders and bikers welcome. Bay Trail info online at <http://baytrail.abag.ca.gov/>. East Bay Regional Park District info (Alameda Creek Trail, Coyote Hills, and Quarry Lakes) at [www.ebparks.org](http://www.ebparks.org).

By BART: Trains are on a Saturday 20-minute schedule. Allow time to purchase ticket and get your bike to platform. From S.F. leave Embarcadero on Dublin/Pleasanton train at 7:09 a.m. and transfer to Fremont train at Bayfair. From East Bay, a Fremont train stops at MacArthur at 7:14 a.m. with direct connections from the Pittsburg/Baypoint train. We will ride about 2 miles via bicycle lane on Decoto Rd. and Alameda Creek Trail to Isherwood Staging Area. View schedules online at [www.transitinfo.org](http://www.transitinfo.org) or call leader.

By car: Take I-880 to Fremont and take Alvarado Blvd./Fremont Blvd. exit; go east on Fremont Blvd. Turn left onto Paseo Padre Pkwy., turn left onto Isherwood Way, cross bridge, and take immediate right into Isherwood Staging Area. If coming from peninsula via Dumbarton Bridge, continue east on Hwy. 84, which becomes Decoto Rd. after crossing I-880, and go 1 mile past I-880, then turn right onto Paseo Padre Pkwy. and follow above directions.



## Coyote Hills Regional Park

*Fremont*

**Sunday, March 13**

Leaders: Michael Butler, 510.684.3375, [mjbkl@earthlink.net](mailto:mjbkl@earthlink.net), and Pamela Llewellyn 925.413.8329, [pllewellyn@kleinfelder.com](mailto:pllewellyn@kleinfelder.com)

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at visitor center parking lot for this half-day trip. We will bird the varied habitats of this jewel of a park looking for waterfowl, waders, songbirds, and a nice assortment of raptors. Bring liquids and sunscreen. Beginners welcome.

From East Bay, take I-880 south to Hwy. 84/Dumbarton Bridge exit. Turn right and continue west. Exit on Paseo Padre Pkwy. Turn right and continue north 1 mile, then turn left on Patterson Ranch Rd. to Coyote Hills.

[\$]



Contact Susan Groves, Field Trips Committee Chair, at 510.654.5954 or [susangroves@att.net](mailto:susangroves@att.net):

- if you can share a ride or if you need a ride,
- if you have difficulty reaching a leader and need information,
- if you have suggestions for trips, or
- if you are interested in leading a trip.

## key

**Carpool**

[\$] **Entrance fee required**

**Biking trip**

## Lake Merritt

Oakland

**Saturday, March 19**

Leader: Travis Hails, 510.451.1207

(no calls after 9 pm), [travishails@yahoo.com](mailto:travishails@yahoo.com)

Meet at 8 a.m. for this monthly trip at the large spherical cage near Nature Center at Perkins and Bellevue Sts. The focus will be on the ducks and other waterfowl of Lake Merritt. Beginners welcome. Bring binoculars and a field guide if you have one.

## Bicycle Trip: Iron Horse Trail

Alameda and Contra Costa Counties

**Saturday, March 19**

Leader: Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233

(no calls after 9 pm), call for cell number, [kathy\\_jarrett@yahoo.com](mailto:kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com)

Meet just outside turnstile at Dublin/Pleasanton BART Station at 8:15 a.m. This flat 20-mile excursion between Dublin and Pleasant Hill is almost entirely on paved bicycle paths, with riparian and wooded areas as well as open fields. We will stop in Danville, where you may purchase food and drink at the Saturday Farmer's Market or nearby Trader Joe's, then proceed to Hap Magee Ranch Park in Alamo for lunch and birding. After we bird ponds at Heather Farms Park in Walnut Creek, the trip will end at the Pleasant Hill BART station around 3 p.m. Dress in layers and bring sunscreen, lunch, and liquids. Bicycle helmet required. Rain cancels. All levels of birders and bikers welcome.

Allow time to get your ticket processed and your bicycle to platform. From S.F. leave Embarcadero on Dublin/Pleasanton train at 7:09 a.m. From East Bay depart Rockridge BART at 7:10 a.m., transferring to Fremont train at MacArthur at 7:14 a.m. and Dublin/Pleasanton train at Bayfair at 7:35 a.m. View BART Saturday schedules online at [www.transitinfo.org](http://www.transitinfo.org) or call leader. Return is from Pleasant Hill BART station.



## San Francisco Bird Blitz

**Saturday, March 19**

Leader: Alan Hopkins, 415.644.0983, [ash@sfo.com](mailto:ash@sfo.com)

In this annual blitz we expect to tally more than 100 different species within the city limits. We will look to exceed all previ-

ous records and will begin at 7 a.m. sharp. Meet at north end of Van Ness Ave. (past North Point, the last cross street) at foot of Municipal Pier. From there we will caravan to other sites, including Golden Gate Park, Sutro Baths, Lake Merced, and Candlestick Point. Bring snacks, lunch, and liquids. At dusk, we will adjourn to a restaurant for dinner to recap the day's observations.

## Aquatic Park

San Francisco

**Sunday, March 20**

Leader: SF Maritime National Historical Park Ranger Carol Kiser  
415.561.7100 or 561.7104

Meet at 9:30 a.m. at foot of Hyde Street Pier (Hyde and Jefferson) for this two-hour beginners' bird walk. Discover birds next door to the urban environment. Dress in layers. Trip is wheelchair accessible.

## Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park

Oakland

**Wednesday, March 23**

Leaders: Hilary Powers, 510.834.1066;  
Travis Hails, 510.451.1207,  
[travishails@yahoo.com](mailto:travishails@yahoo.com);  
Ruth Tobey, [ruthtobey@earthlink.net](mailto:ruthtobey@earthlink.net)

Meet on lake side of Nature Center on Bellevue Ave. at 9:30 a.m. See February *Gull* for details and directions.

## Arrowhead Marsh Family Trip

Oakland

**Friday, March 25**

Leader: Rene Urriola  
510.938.8016, [rene25@gmail.com](mailto:rene25@gmail.com)

Meet at 3:15 p.m. in front of lookout structure at Arrowhead Marsh. This new, monthly trip is for families who want to learn about Arrowhead Marsh birds and restore habitat. Kids of all ages are welcome. The trip will be conducted in Spanish and English. Bring your own binoculars if you have them. Binoculars will also be available. Trip will end around 5 p.m.

Take I-880 to Hegenberger exit, then go west on Hegenberger to Doolittle Dr. Turn right on Doolittle, then right onto Swan Way and left into MLK, Jr. Regional Shoreline Park. Drive to end for Arrowhead Marsh parking lot.

## Candlestick State Recreation Area Bird Walk

San Francisco

**Saturday, March 26**

Leader: David Armstrong, 415.305.7681  
(cell), [darmstrong99@yahoo.com](mailto:darmstrong99@yahoo.com)

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at parking lot near main entrance to Candlestick State Recreation Area for this two-hour walk. Exit Hwy. 101 at 3Com Park and follow signs to recreation area.

## Rush Creek Trail

Marin County

**Sunday, March 27**

Leader: Rusty Scalf  
510.666.9936, [rscalf@jps.net](mailto:rscalf@jps.net)

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Rush Creek Trail. From S.F. and East Bay, cross bay, then head north on Hwy. 101 and drive nearly length of Marin County. Exit at Atherton/San Marin. At end of off-ramp turn right, then almost immediately turn left (a Park and Ride lot will be on your left). Road will drop down to a frontage road on way to Marin Airport. An extensive marsh will be to your right. The Marin County Open Space trailhead is on your right very soon after you get on this frontage road. For a map, visit [www.co.marin.ca.us/depts/PK/Main/os/pdf/RushCreekweb.fh10.pdf](http://www.co.marin.ca.us/depts/PK/Main/os/pdf/RushCreekweb.fh10.pdf). For a description of the place, visit [www.marinopenspace.org/os\\_park\\_26.asp](http://www.marinopenspace.org/os_park_26.asp).

## Condor Watch 2005

Pinnacles National Monument

**Saturday, April 23**

Leaders: Bob Risebrough, 510.549.2476,  
[pelecanus@igc.org](mailto:pelecanus@igc.org); Hans Peeters

Join us for the Second Annual Condor Watch. We will meet at Bear Gulch Visitor Center at 8 a.m., walk lowland trails, and Gulch Trail to overlook then return to campground area in late afternoon. Several of us will be staying at the campground (reservations at [www.pinncamp.com](http://www.pinncamp.com) or 831.389.4462) at site 35, the same as last year. Participants may wish to arrive on Friday; they are invited to join us at the campground from about 4 p.m. There will be potluck dinners and beverages at our campsite both Friday and Saturday evenings.

Follow Hwy. 25 south from Hollister to Hwy. 146, then go west to Pinnacles National Monument entrance. Download maps and other monument information from [www.nps.gov/pinn](http://www.nps.gov/pinn). Contact Bob Risebrough for more information.

# OBSERVATIONS

January 1-31, 2005  
Bruce Mast



**A**s I write, the weather has turned sunny and warm, the neighborhood Bewick's Wren has taken up his singing post and White-throated Swifts are hawking overhead. But it wasn't always so. January was a quintessential winter month: plenty of rain, cold, wind, and one of the highest tides in recent years. Not surprisingly, ducks and other aquaphiles dominated the hotlines. Outside of the Bay Area, the biggest stir in Northern California was caused by a **Common Black-hawk** (*Buteogallus anthracinus*) found lurking around Lake Lincoln in north Stockton (SJ). If accepted, this would be just the third Black-hawk record for CA. Prior accepted records were both from RIV: Thousand Palms Oasis (1985) and Oasis, Salton Sea (1997).

## Loons to Ducks

A Red-throated Loon ventured into the shallow waters of Arrowhead Marsh, MLK Jr. RP (ALA) on Jan. 8 and again on the 12th (PK; DQ). The Crissy Fields Red-necked Grebe remained throughout the month (mob) while a 2nd Red-necked Grebe was seen at Duncan's Landing, SON, only on the 22nd (RS). At Hudeman Slough Wetlands, SON, a White-faced Ibis turned up on the 15th (KW; mob). More than 150 Greater White-fronted Geese were reported from 20 locales in 7 counties. Fourteen locales hosted Snow Geese and Ross's Geese turned up at 8 sites (mob). Lake Cunningham (SCL), Arrowhead Marsh and Golden Gate Fields (ALA) tallied more than 100 Cackling Geese, while 7 other spots recorded fewer numbers. Tundra Swans wandered into Corte Madera, MRN, on the 22nd (HK) and to Livermore, ALA, the next day (ArE).

A male Eurasian Green-winged (Common) Teal remained all month in the company of the American ducks at Arrowhead Marsh (mob) and another was

found at Stevens Creek, Shoreline Park (SCL) on the 1st (DWe). A couple Eurasian-American hybrids were also reported. The Bay Area played host to 5 Tufted Ducks, 6 Harlequins, and 9 Long-tailed Ducks last month. White-winged and Black Scoters



Red-throated Loon.

stuck mostly to open water but a female White-Winged spent a day at Spreckles Lake, GGP (SF) on the 21st (RF). As many as 150 Barrow's Goldeneyes were tallied from a stalled Amtrak train in Martinez, CC, on the 7th. The most intriguing bird was an apparent Hooded x Goldeneye cross at Lake Merritt, in Oakland, where it kept company with a Barrow's/Common Goldeneye flock (TH; mob). Photos of a subadult hybrid from last year suggest that the bird has returned for a 2nd winter.

## Raptors to Alcids

At Lake Merced, SF, sharp-eyed observers distinguished a hover-hunting juvenile Broad-winged Hawk on the 6th and again on the 15th (DM; ASH, NW). Ferruginous Hawks were regular visitors, with concentrations along Robinson Road in eastern SOL, and in the Coyote and Isabella Valleys in SCL. Robinson Road also yielded 3 Rough-legged Hawks Jan. 22-30 (PeM,

JRy). Golden Eagles, Merlins, Peregrine and Prairie Falcons were widely reported. The new moon of Jan. 9-10 produced exceptionally high tides. Crowds turned out at Waldo's Dike, MRN, in hopes of spotting **Yellow Rail** (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*) and Black Rail. They were not disappointed. However, the burgeoning popularity of the Dike is proving to be its undoing. Future access will likely be curtailed to preserve high-water habitat.

Up to 227 Mountain Plovers staked out a sprouted grain field south of Flannery Road, SOL, where they remained all month (JS; mob). Wandering Tattlers turned up at Seal Rocks, SF, on the 9th (MB) and at the Emeryville Crescent, ALA, on the 18th (ET). Ruddy Turnstones wandered to Arrowhead Marsh on the 8th (PK); to Candlestick Point SRA; SF, on the 15th (MB; DA); and to Coyote Point, SM, on the 22nd (AE; mob). The same Coyote Point visit yielded a half dozen Red Knots. Two more Knots were noted at Shell Beach, Foster City (SM) on the 6th (RF). The New Year brought Red Phalaropes to Shoreline Lake, SCL, (BRe, RK, PKe); to Fort Funston, SF (AWi, KMK, DA); and to Rodeo Lagoon, MRN (WL). A Parasitic Jaeger joined the Phalarope at Fort Funston on the 1st and a 2nd winter Pomarine Jaeger raised hell off Ocean Blvd, Moss Beach, (SM) on the 21st (RST).

The most exciting Bay Area bird was a 2nd year **Slaty-backed Gull** (*Larus schistisagus*), discovered Jan. 13 among the massive gull flock at Venice Beach in Half Moon Bay, SM (AJ; mob). Excitement was compounded by the discovery of a 2nd Slaty-backed, this one a 3rd cycle bird, on Jan. 20. Sightings continued through at least the 26th. Currently, no accepted California record for Slaty-backed exists, though the CBRC is currently reviewing a recent report. In the process of scrutinizing the flock, birders also found up to 5 Glaucous Gulls. Single Glaucous Gulls were found coastsides in SM, MRN, and SON and bayside in SCL. A Black-legged Kittiwake came within scope distance of Fort Funston on the 13th (DM) and 6 Ancient Murrelets floated off of Duncan's Landing, SON, on the 22nd (RS).

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



Doves to Thrashers

Up to 10 Burrowing Owls were noted from 7 locales in 4 counties. A Long-eared Owl remained roosting at the Elm Picnic Area in Ed Levin CP, SCL, through at least the 10th (mob). Another Long-eared Owl chose a willow clump in Half Moon Bay, SM, on the 24th (RST). Short-eared Owls were noted in SCL, NAP, and SON counties (MM, MRo, MP, WP). The College of San Mateo Williamson's Sapsucker remained through at least the 15th (mob). Its Red-naped cousin put in an appearance at Point Reyes Station, MRN, on the 8th (DE).

An unseasonable Hammond's Flycatcher spent 3 days at Chicken Ranch Beach, near Inverness, MRN, starting the 9th (RT; BL, RS). A *Myarchus* Flycatcher, possibly Ash-throated, turned up in Pleasanton, ALA, on the 12th (PL). For the 2nd time in 3 years, SM played host to a wintering **Sedge Wren** (*Cistothorus platensis*). From Jan. 9 to the 26th, it skulked in the dry fennel along the public trail along Littlefield Rd, SSF (RST; mob). There are just a half dozen Sedge Wren records for CA and this would be just the 2nd wintering record. At Santa Teresa Park, San Jose, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher on the 29th was about 2 months early (JaP). Even more unseasonal, a Swainson's Thrush met its demise at Stinson Beach, MRN, on or about the 1st (BoB, RS).



Yellow-headed Blackbird.

Wood Warblers to Finches

Phainopeplas were regular in Diablo range valleys of eastern ALA and SCL (mob) and 2 of the silky-flycatchers visited Lake Solano County Park, SOL, on the 8th (LW,

Wood Warbler Sightings

Nashville Warbler

1/4	Lafayette Park, SF	DA
1/6	Glen Canyon Park, SF	DA
1/10-23	Pine Lake, SF	PMC; DVP
1/16	Junipero Serra Park County Park, SM	RST

Yellow Warbler

1/9-23	Pine Lake, SF	MB; DVP, ASH, EP, PS
1/1	Vintage Dr. in Foster City, SM	RST

Black-throated Gray Warbler

1/16	Junipero Serra Park County Park, SM	RST
------	-------------------------------------	-----

Hermit Warbler

1/24	Half Moon Bay, SM	RST
------	-------------------	-----

Palm Warbler

1/6	Lafayette Park, SF	JW
1/25	Steinberger Slough, Redwood Shores, SM	RST

Black-and-white Warbler

1/1	Stinson Beach, Marin	BoB
1/2	Gazos Creek, SM	Ano Nuevo CBC

Wilson's Warbler

1/14	Almaden Lake and Coleman Rd., SCL	AV
------	-----------------------------------	----

**Abbreviations for Observers:** Abbreviations for Observers: DA, David Armstrong; BB, Bill Bousman; BoB, Bob Battagin; BrB, Brian Bullock; DB, Dennis Braddy; KB, Ken Burton; MB, MB; PB, Patricia Braddy; HC, Hugh Cotter; JC, Josiah Clark; LC, Les Chibana; RC, Rich Cimino; ADM, Al DeMartini; GD, Gary Deghi; JD, Jim Danzenbaker; MD, Mike Day; DE, Daniel Edelstein; AE, Al Eisner; ArE, Art Edwards; MWE, Mark Eaton; BF, Brian Fitch; MF, Mike Feighner; RF, Rich Ferrick; RFi, RF; LG, Laura Gee; SG, Steve Glover; ASH, Alan Hopkins; DH, Denise Hamilton; GH, Garth Harwood; KH, Keith Hansen; LH, Lisa Hug; SH, Steve Huckabone; TH, Travis Hails; DL, Don Lewis; AJ, Alvaro Jaramillo; AK, Alan Krakauer; BK, Bill Keener; DK, Dave Kiehl; HK, Harrison Karr; PK, Patrick King; PeK, Penny Kiehl; PKE, Pat Kenny; PL, Pamela Llewellyn; RK, Roland Kenner; BL, Bill Lenaris; CL, Cindy Lieurance; CDL, Calvin Lou; DL, Don Lewis; JL, John Luther; LL, Les Lieurance; RL, Robin Leong; RLe, Rick Lebaudour; WL, William Legge; DM, Dan Murphy; JM, Joe Morlan; PMC, Pat McCulloch; KMK, Kevin McKereghan; MM, Mike Mammoser; PM, Peter Metropulos; PeM, Peggy Macres; RM, Roger Muskat; FO, Frances Oliver; KO, Kris Olson; BP, Bob Power; EP, Eric Preston; JP, John Poole; JaP, Janna Pauser; MP, Mike Parameter; PP, Peter Pyle; WP, Wendy Peterson; DQ, Dave Quady; BRe, Bob Reiling; JR, Jean Richmond; JRy, Jennifer Rycenga; MR, Mark Rauzon; MRo, Mike Rogers; SR, Siobhan Ruck; DS, David Suddjian; DSi, Dan Singer; JS, Jim Steinert; PS, Paul Saraceni; RS, Rich Stallcup; RSc, Rusty Scalf; RST, Ron Storey; ET, Ed Tanov; RT, Ryan Terrill; RST, Ron Thorn; MU, Myra Ulvang; AV, Ann Verdi; DVP, David Vander Pluym; FV, Frank Vanslager; AW, Alan Wight; AWi, Adam Winer; DW, Denise Wight; DWe, Dave Weber; DWi, Dave Wimpfheimer; JW, Jeff Wall; KW, Ken Wilson; LW, Liz West; NW, Nathaniel Wander; NiW, Nick Whelan; JY, James Yurchenco; MZ, Matt Zlatunich;

Semicolons separate original observer(s) from subsequent observer(s). Abbreviation "mob" = many observers; "oob" = other observers. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listservs; the author apologizes for any errors or omissions.

**Abbreviations for Counties and Others:** ALA, Alameda; BBA, Breeding Bird Atlas; CBC, Christmas Bird Count; CC, Contra Costa; CCFS, Coyote Creek Field Station; Cr., Creek; Cyn., Canyon; DENWR, Don Edwards SF Bay National Wildlife Refuge; GGP, Golden Gate Park; L., Lake; MRN, Marin; MTY, Monterey; N., North; NAP, Napa; NSMWA, NAP-SON Marshes Wildlife Area; OSP, Open Space Preserve; Pt., Point; PRNS, Pt Reyes National Seashore; RP, Regional Park; Rd, Road; Res., Reservoir; RIV, Riverside; RS, Regional Shoreline; SB, State Beach; SCL, Santa Clara; SF, San Francisco; SJ, San Joaquin; SM, San Mateo; SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma; SP, State Park; SR, State Reserve; WPCP, Water Pollution Control Plant

FO). Vagrant warblers were characteristically sparse; the highlight being a female Magnolia Warbler that remained all month at Pine Lake, SF (mob). Overwintering Western Tanagers were noted on Jan. 6 on the UC Berkeley campus ALA, (AK); on the 9th at Middle Lake, GGP, SF (SR); Jan. 9-16 at Pine Lake, SF, (MB; mob); and on the 25th in Napa (DH).

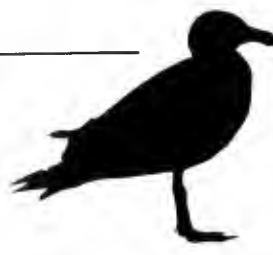
A Grasshopper Sparrow was an unexpected visitor to Santa Teresa County Park, SCL, on the 3rd (GH). Grasshopper Sparrows more typically return to the Bay Area in April. The Jan. 8-25 high tides were good opportunities to glimpse elusive Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows at Arrowhead Marsh, ALA (mob) and Corte Madera Marsh, MRN, (RSt, MD, BK; NiW). Rail watchers at Waldo's Dike got bonus views of a Nelson's Jan. 9-10 (mob). Red Fox Sparrow, typical winter visitors to the southeastern U.S., instead spent Jan. 4-15 at Meeker Slough in Richmond, CC

(BoB; RC). A feeder in Sonoma attracted a Harris's Sparrow Jan. 5-24 (BrB; mob). A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak joined a White-throated Sparrow at a Walnut Creek, CC, feeder on the 19th (LG).

On Ryer's Island, in the eastern SOL delta, a Yellow-headed Blackbird was the most unusual *Icterid* on the 9th (RM). In SF, Orioles held that honor. A possible Orchard/Bullock was scrutinized on the 7th at Strybing Arboretum, GGP; (NW); an Orchard Oriole lingered Jan. 15-30 at Lake Merced below the boathouse (HC; mob); and a Bullock's Oriole spent most of the month at Pine Lake (ASH, HC; DVP). Red Crossbills continued at their traditional haunts at the Presidio, SF (AWi); Skylawn Memorial Gardens, SM (AE; DWe, RST); and Henry Coe State Park, SCL (mob). Finally, flocks of Evening Grosbeaks visited Historic Watson School on Bodega Highway, SON, on the 17th and Point Reyes Station, MRN, on the 24th (RS).

# BACKYARD BIRDER

Meg Pauletich



**B**reeding season has arrived, with male and female birds starting to engage in courtship displays and form pair bonds. The desire to nest usually begins shortly after mating, with one or both sexes picking the site and gathering nesting materials. The nest will be the nursery, although some species continue to use it as protection from the elements after the young fledge.

We tend to think of a bird nest as the familiar bowl-like form of a robin's nest. But there are all sorts of avian architectural wonders mainly because of each species' particular needs, such as available materials, food requirements, and protection from predators and the weather. Some nests, such as the Killdeer's, are simply a scrape on the ground or pebbles. Many seabirds have barely a nest while others use burrows. There are floating nests (grebes), stick platforms (crows), holes in trees (woodpeckers and Wood Ducks), enclosed or domed nests (bowerbirds), suspended nests (orioles and Bushtits), and all manner of mud structures.

Human encroachment on wildlife habitat has resulted in a shortage of "housing," particularly for hole-nesting birds. Dead trees, where woodpeckers would most like to make their home, are seldom left standing near residential areas. After woodpeckers abandon the holes, other species occupy them.

You can help the housing shortage in the Bay Area by providing nest boxes for species that prefer tree holes. You can make your own boxes if you're handy, or you can purchase houses at one of the many local bird-supply stores. About 35 cavity-nesting birds will use bird houses or nest boxes. Each species has specific requirements for floor size, depth of box, and diameter of the entrance hole. It may also be necessary to install some type of wire to prevent unwelcome species from invading the box. The height from the ground also varies according to species.

Here are a few general guidelines:

- Since the young of most cavity dwellers are born naked, they are vulnerable to extremes of heat and cold. The box should not be oriented so that the entrance hole is exposed to the prevailing direction of storms. When you mount the box, make sure that it is slanted slightly toward the ground to provide protection from rain. An extreme angle, however, might tip the baby birds out of the nest.
- Since birds are territorial, they prefer some distance between them and their next-door neighbors. You do not want to install too many nest boxes in your yard.
- Try to position the box to allow a clear flight to the entrance—although I've seen some pretty tricky flight maneuvers by titmice, nuthatches, and chickadees when entering a box.
- If cats prowl your yard, the box should be on a metal pole or have a metal guard that prevents felines, as well as raccoons or snakes, from accessing the box.
- Undesirable birds such as Starlings or House Sparrows may decide to take up residence, but can be discouraged by temporarily plugging the entrance hole. Since they nest early in the year, you can hold out for native species.
- At the end of the nesting season, clean house. This will reduce parasites. Most nest boxes have removable backs or bottoms. Take out and discard the nesting materials, scrub the box with a stiff-bristled brush and water, and rehang it to "age" until the next breeding season. Most new houses are ignored until they age for about one year.

It's also fun to provide nesting materials that birds can use to line any type of nest.

Lint from your clothes dryer (no fabric softeners, please), dog hair, and string or yarn are all suitable items. Place the materials in a plastic berry basket, hang it in your yard, and watch the action. Some birds are simply ingenious. A pair of Cactus Wrens were observed constructing a nest entirely of household supplies such as paper clips, rubber bands, thumbtacks, and safety and straight pins. The 1,791 items added up to a nest that weighed two and a half pounds! I once saw a Cactus Wren nest that was all dolled up with yards of discarded audiotape glistening in the sun.

When watching nesting pairs, use common sense. Most birds will abandon their nests if unduly disturbed, especially in the



Wood Duck pair.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

beginning phases. Some species are more skittish than others. If a bird flushes off its eggs or stops feeding its young, back off. Some birds are so accustomed to human presence, however, that they have been known to nest on a wreath left on a front door after the holidays.

If your spying is innocuous, you will be rewarded and entertained. And maybe you will be lucky enough to see a young bird's first flight. When on a trip in eastern Oregon, I had noticed Pygmy Nuthatch adults going in and out of a hole about 20 feet above the ground in a small sycamore tree. As I sat quietly in the sun after breakfast, the young slowly popped out of the nest hole, one by one, before flying off in a family flock. It was a Kodak moment without the film, but I still carry the picture in my mind.

## Donations

Thank you for your generous donations to support our many conservation, education and member activities!

### Golden Eagle (\$1000 or more)

Anonymous, Kathleen & Brian Bean, Marianne Blair & Alfredo Contreras, Andrea Burhoe, Margaret Seely, Susan Witter (*in honor of Ann Witter, for the Eco-Oakland Program*)

### Peregrine Falcon (\$500 to \$999)

Carol Baxter, Jean Conner, Jane Dang, Ann & Mike Richter, Allan Ridley, John H. Sutter

### Least Tern (\$200 to \$499)

Pamela Bendich (*Just Give Foundation*), Barbara Dengler, Joe Ferrie & Madhu Prasher, Alan Harper, Totton Heffelfinger, Steven & Renee Margolin, Mona Mena, Roger Mendelson, John S. Nelson, Elizabeth Sojourner, Joanne Sarg Wallin

### Clapper Rail (\$100 to \$199)

Bob Battagin, Ron & Susan Briggs, Richard & Mary Conway, Margaret Deane, Mark Eaton, Julian Elliot, Susan Finch, Cornelia Foster (*Bank of America*), Dorothy Frantz, Robert C. Friese, Barbara H. Gibbons, Amanda Hamilton, Judith Irving (*Quail Campaign*), Christopher James, F. Johnston, Annis Kukulan, Jane & Michael Larkin, Leslie Lethridge, Stephen & Carol Lombardi, David & Cecily Majerus,

Julia & Dean Mayberry, Don McCarthy, Charlotte Nolan (*Conservation*), Lenie Perkins, Kathleen Ramos, Carla Rugeroni, Marc Rumminger, Ken & Marjorie Sauer, Douglas Sherk, Craig & Jane Spriggs, Mrs. Juliette Wheeler, Stephanie Woods

### Gifts (to \$99)

Yolande Adelson, Lori Austin, Sandra Ball, David T. Barr, Olive L. Bavins, Marc & Mara Bearse, Edward L. & Mildred J. Bennett, Walter Berger, Daniel Bickley, Nicholas Bonnell (*Restore-A-Thon*), Ann Boren, Heather Borman, William E. Boyd, Richard Bradus, Patricia Busk, Eugenia & Peter Caldwell, Ellen Campbell, Courtney Clarkson & Roy Leggitt, Barbara Conheim, Glenda Cook, Sylvia Darr, Barry Deutsch, S.M. Dickie, Lewis Feldman, Brian Fitch, L.H. Fitzgerald, M.D., Cindy Fosselius, Robert Freidenberg, Leslie Friedman, L. Fries, R. Dean Galloway, Gerald Ganz, Elaine K. Geffen, Clara Gerdes, Kimberly Goodhope, Dr. & Mrs. Eugene L. Gottfried, James & Ruth Gravanis, Gary Grimm, P.L. Hagerty, Mary Hambleton (*Restore-A-Thon*), Grace E. Hardie, Marguerite D. Harrell, Robert Hayes, John Hess, Winifred Hess, Ruth L. Hinkins, Anne Hoff, Mary Hudson, Barbara Hurtig, Andrew Imbrie, Bob Isaacson, Linda F. Jacobs, Elisabeth Jacobsohn, Carol T. Jekabson, M. Anne Jennings, Alec & Marie Karp, Richard Kaufmann, Elizabeth W. King, Edwin H. Knapp, Marcia Kolb, Sarah Kulberg, Corey & Rita Largman, John W. Laws, Enid I. & Irwin Leff, Donald Leonard, Douglas Leslie, William & Louise Lidicker, Leonard O. Long,

Alan Lyons, Whitlow Msager (*K/P Corporation*), Henry & Deada Mally, Robert & Johanna Mandel, Linda Maniwa, Eugenie Marek, Bruce Mast, Jane Maxwell, Toni & Katherine Miles, Jean L. Miller, Marie Murray, Cordelia Neal (*Christmas Bird Count*), JoAnn Ogden (*Charles Schwab Corp. Foundation*), Shirley Osher, Dennis & Sharon Osmond, Jennifer Ott, Margot S. Parke, Sarah Paul, Bob Power, Hilary Powers, Norma Randig, Darryl L. Raszl, M.D., Kate Ratcliff, William E. Reynolds, Ronald Reiter, Donald A. Riley, Krehe H. & Katherine S. Ritter, Laurel Robinson, Stephen & Linda Rosen, Carla Ruff, Chester Sausaman, Derek Schneider, David Schwartz, Alan & Adrienne Scroggie, Alistair Sherret, Michael Sherwood & Kathy Keeran, Deborah Slotsky, Robert Selden Smith, Margaret Spaulding, Andrea Speraw, Jane L. Stallman, Albert C. Starr, Virginia Stearns, William & Martha Steen, Lynn M. Strandberg, Liz Struble, Larry M. Sullivan, Sylvia L. Sykora, Richard & Sharon Tamm, Jean Thomas, Gretchen Thometz, Yolanda Thompson, Sandy Threlfall, Liz Varnhagen, Douglas Vaughan, Colleen N. Vetter, Carol L. Wallace, Mal Warwick & Associates (*matching gift*), Mr. & Mrs. J.C. Watts, Marianne Weigel, Greg Welker, Kristi Whitfield, C. Wildsoet, Brenda & Victor Wong, Richard Woodul II, Ruth & David Wrentmore, Eric Wrubel

### In Memory of

Bonnie Stempel Anderson: *David Edward Anderson*

### In-Kind

Helen Green: *Plastic index sheets*

## Are You a Supporting Member of Golden Gate Audubon?

Did you know Golden Gate Audubon, a chapter of National Audubon Society (NAS), is an independent organization with its own separate budget? We receive less than \$3 of your \$20-plus NAS membership—which does not begin to cover the cost of producing the *Gull*, managing our extensive conservation and environmental education programs in San Francisco and the East Bay, and offering field trips, classes, and monthly slide-lectures. If you join Golden Gate Audubon *directly* you will have the satisfaction of knowing that 100 percent of your Supporting Membership helps to support our *local* programs.

PLEASE BECOME A GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SUPPORTING MEMBER TODAY!

Please select a membership level:

- ☐ Student \$20
- ☐ Brown Pelican (Individual) \$25
- ☐ California Quail (Family) \$40
- ☐ Clapper Rail \$100–199
- ☐ Least Tern \$200–499
- ☐ Peregrine Falcon \$500–999
- ☐ Golden Eagle \$1,000 and above

☐ My check, payable to **Golden Gate Audubon Society**, is enclosed.

☐ Please charge my credit card: ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_ (mm/yy)

Name as it appears on card \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I would also like to include an additional donation to support Golden Gate Audubon's conservation, education and birding programs.

Membership \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Please do not share my name with any other organization.

Your contributions to Golden Gate Audubon are fully tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.

**Thank you for becoming a Supporting Member of Golden Gate Audubon!**

Two Nashville Warblers were in the Presidio and another at Middle Lake in Golden Gate Park. A Western Tanager was found at the Potrero Hill Recreation Center.

Although duck numbers were low, we did have our share of unusual and hard-to-find species. A Long-tailed Duck was observed off Candlestick Point, a Harlequin Duck at Mile Rock, and three Hooded Mergansers (below) at Golden Gate Park's Chain of Lakes. Counters at Fort Funston and other locations spotted a total of 17 Black Scoters. Three Blue-winged Teals showed up at the SamTrans bus yard in South San Francisco.

Endangered and threatened species continue to have a presence. The 11 Clapper

Rails at the SamTrans bus yard certainly suggest that this species has gained a permanent foothold in northern San Mateo County. The four Peregrine Falcons were normal, or even a bit low, for the count. The 30 Common Yellowthroats were scattered over the entire count area, with the exception of 14 at Lake Merced, which indicates the value of the lake for this listed species. Of course, the only place where we had Snowy Plover was on Ocean Beach, where 30 birds were counted.

The count week birds included one species new to the San Francisco CBC—and quite remarkable. Convincing documentation was submitted for an adult Laughing Gull found on the beach at the north end of Fort Funston. Brandt, Red-necked Phalarope, and Rhinoceros Auklet were the other three count-week birds. All are rare species for this CBC.

Finally, there were the birds that people always seem to notice and want to know about. We had an all-

time high of 89 Red-masked Parakeets, which are seen from Telegraph Hill west to the Presidio. Since our count does not cover the areas where the other city parrots reside, we did not get a tally for Canary-winged or White-cheveroned Parakeets. Everyone's favorite big black birds are crows and ravens. Neither the 207 crows nor the 285 ravens was a high count, but both species are pretty firmly entrenched. Finally, for the larger hawks, we had 80 Red-tailed and 60 Red-shouldered Hawks.

Thanks to all those who participated, to the Golden Gate Audubon staff for their support and help in putting the count together, and to the Presidio Trust for providing the use of the Log Cabin for the countdown dinner. Be sure to check the National Audubon Society website at [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/) for all the details on this year's count. Our preliminary date for the 2005 San Francisco CBC is Thursday, December 29.

by Dan Murphy and Alan Hopkins, Compilers

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

*The GULL* is the official newsletter of Golden Gate Audubon Society. As a Supporting Member of Golden Gate Audubon, you receive a subscription to *The GULL*, a 10 percent discount on all items purchased at our nature store, and the satisfaction of supporting local conservation efforts. Local members of the National Audubon Society are encouraged to join Golden Gate Audubon directly. Contact our office at 510.843.2222 for details.

### GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY

2530 SAN PABLO AVENUE, SUITE G  
BERKELEY, CA 94702

*Return service requested*

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
OAKLAND, CA  
PERMIT NO. 1702

GGAS                      NAS  
Library California Academy Of Sciences  
875 Howard St  
San Francisco CA 94103-3009



**TIME SENSITIVE MAIL**